United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General welcomes establishment of Mujahedeen Interim Council in Kabul; United Nations to begin assessment of humanitarian needs in Afghanistan and to reactivate Operation Salaam to assist in immediate repatriation of Afghan refugees.

+ Hungary and United Kingdom pledge to reduce carbon dioxide emissions as Committee on Climate Change Convention resumes negotiations.

+ Cuba requests meeting of Security Council to consider "sabotage of the Cubana de Aviación aircraft" destroyed near Barbados on 6 october 1976.

+ Sisophon Express -- first repatriation operation by rail of Cambodian refugees by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees -- brings 612 refugees back to Phnom Penh today.

+ Distinction between preventive diplomacy and preventive peace-keeping is examined by delegates in continuing general debate of the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations.

+ Palestinian Rights Committee accepts offer by Malta to host its European Regional Seminar on the Question of Palestine at the end of July.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today welcomed the establishment of the Mujahedeen Interim Council in Kabul which he described as "an important step towards the end of the suffering of the Afghan people".

In a statement issued at Headquarters today, the Secretary-General also welcomed the declaration of amnesty, saying much healing was needed in Afghanistan. "This is the time for rehabilitation and reconstruction and for the promotion of Afghan unity", he said, adding that "the United Nations stands ready to help the people of Afghanistan in pursuing these goals".

(more)

For information media—not an official record

The Secretary-General held discussions with Iranian and Pakistani leaders and with the Afghan mujahedeen leaders during his visit to the two countries last weekend. Mr. Boutros-Ghali's Personal Representative, Benon Sevan, was present at those meetings.

Meanwhile, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Eliasson, has asked the Secretary-General's Personal Representative in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Benon Sevan, to carry out an immediate assessment of the humanitarian needs in Afghanistan. He has also asked Mr. Sevan to prepare a plan to reactivate Operation Salaam for immediate assistance in the repatriation and rehabilitation process. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is already assisting refugees and is preparing to support their repatriation.

According to a United Nations spokeswoman, the need for humanitarian assistance throughout Afghanistan is acute, and it is hoped that a plan to provide such assistance can be put into operation as quickly as the security situation improves. Existing pledges of some 20,000 tonnes of food from Pakistan and the United States and some other countries will be used to support these activities. Due to the rapid changes in the security conditions, not only in Kabul and its surrounding areas but also on all land routes, it has not been possible to arrange further shipments of food, the spokeswoman said.

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The representatives of the United Kingdom and Hungary this morning announced their Government's commitment to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, as the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a framework convention on climate change resumed its fifth session.

The representative of the United Kingdom said that, provided other countries took similar action, his Government was ready to set itself the target of returning carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000. Hungary pledged that by that same year, its carbon dioxide emissions from domestic energy consumption would not exceed the annual emission level of the period 1985 to 1987.

The Committee Chairman, Jean Ripert (France), said this was the last round of negotiations; there would be no further resumption, and outstanding issues could not be discussed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in June. Rather, the Committee was to submit a report to the Conference.

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Cuba has demanded that the Security Council condemn the "sabotage of the Cubana de Aviación aircraft" which was destroyed in mid-flight, near Barbados on 6 october 1976, and has charged that the United States was involved with the plane's downing which took the lives of 73 people.

(more)

In a letter to the President of the Council, dated 27 April, the Cuban Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada, said that not to condemn that act would "dishonour the Council and undermine its prestige and credibility". He has requested a meeting of the Council as soon as possible.

The Cuban letter also calls the Council's attention to other issues including what it calls "terrorist activities against the people of Cuba", previously brought to the Council's attention. Those activities, the letter charges, include the announced plans of groups residing in the United States to invade Cuba with the "complicity or tolerance of the Washington Government". (S/23850)

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The first repatriation operation by rail of Cambodian refugees, undertaken by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), carried 612 refugees from Sisophon to Phnom Penh today in a specially chartered train.

With the successful run by what has been called the "Sisophon Express", it is hoped that movements by rail can be arranged during the rainy season - from May to August - when road conditions deteriorate.

According to the UNHCR, 5,703 refugees have been returned to Cambodia by convoys from camps in Thailand since 30 March, when the Agency began its largest and most complex repatriation operation.

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The distinction between preventive diplomacy and preventive peace-keeping has been examined by representatives of several States in the continuing general debate of the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations.

The representative of China emphasized that all peace-keeping operations must recognize the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States. An operation could only be established at the request and with the agreement of all parties involved, under the explicit authorization of the Security Council. He went on to say that the role of regional organizations should be given full play in the area of preventive diplomacy.

The essential involvement of regional organizations in peace-keeping activities was also stressed by the representative of Egypt. Such organizations, in conjunction with the United Nations, had played a commendable role in Somalia and Libya. He also pointed out that while the Security Council was responsible for authorizing peace-keeping operations, the Charter assigned the General Assembly a role in the maintenance of peace.

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The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has decided to accept an offer by Malta to host its European Regional Seminar on the Question of Palestine at the end of July. The exact dates for the seminar will be determined in consultations with the Government.

At a meeting yesterday, the Committee approved the proposed programme for its North American Seminar, to be held in New York from 22 to 23 June. It also approved the requests of some 80 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to participate in NGO meetings organized by the Committee.

Committee Chairman Keba Birane Cisse of Senegal reported on the Preparatory Meeting for the Sixth United Nations European Regional NGO Symposium, as well as the Ninth United Nations International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine, which was held at Geneva at the end of March.

He said the meeting had provided the participants with an opportunity to share with each other valuable experiences and special insights which were helpful in planning the International NGO Meeting and the European NGO Symposium.

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